



News from White Haven

Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site educates the American people regarding the lives and legacies of Civil War General and 18th President Ulysses S. Grant, his wife, Julia Dent Grant, the enslaved African Americans and other residents of White Haven.

News from White Haven is a quarterly publication of Ulysses S. Grant NHS. It is also available online by visiting www.nps.gov/ulsg/.

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Ferguson-Florissant Students Visit



Eighth grade students and their teacher from Ferguson-Florissant School District discuss Ulysses S. Grant's actions during the Civil War in the park museum.

Last fall, after the unrest in Ferguson, Superintendent Tim Good and the park staff began meetings with colleagues at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell, the National Alliance of Faith and Justice, and the Ferguson-Florissant School District. The idea was to develop a program that would help students understand that the events in their community were the result of many actions, some dating to the Civil War.

The park invited teachers to the site ahead of time to ensure the program would match their curriculum. The National Park Service and Jefferson National Parks Association worked together to provide transportation funding. In May, the park hosted just over 600 Ferguson-Florissant eighth graders. The programs focused on the changing role of African

Americans, before, during, and after the Civil War. The emphasis was on individuals taking action; Grant's civil rights policies, African Americans fleeing slavery, joining the army, taking a stand, obtaining an education, and voting. The twin goals were to create awareness that historical events have relevance today, and that individual actions are as important now as they were in the past.

The students were awesome. They were attentive and involved. Several teachers noted their appreciation of the park's efforts. The park staff enjoyed working with the students and the teachers, and we are looking forward to working with Ferguson-Florissant School District again next year and perhaps making their visit an annual event.

Superintendent Good on the Lincoln Funeral Journey

Four years ago, as one of the events that commenced the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, the National Park Service commemorated Lincoln's Inaugural Journey with two weeks of programs from Springfield, Illinois to Washington, DC. The programs consisted of an introduction by a National Park Service ranger followed by the accomplished Lincoln portrayer, Fritz Klein, who used Lincoln's words from his 1861 journey for his remarks. I had the privilege of coordinating and leading that National Park Service team four years ago.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's Funeral journey, I was asked to coordinate and lead this trip as well. Following the pattern established in 2011, we delivered programs in all the major cities that held a Lincoln Funeral for his journey home from Washington, DC to Springfield, Illinois. Once again, we had a National Park Service ranger introduce Fritz Klein, who delivered remarks based entirely on Lincoln's words as they related to the



Lincoln actor Fritz Klein presents his program for students at the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, DC.—NPS photo.

idea that the United States was "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" – his vision of moving the nation from Civil War toward Civil Rights. Duey Kol of the National Park Service's Washington, DC Interpretation, Education and Volunteers office and Vanessa Torres of Santa Monica Mountains

National Recreation Area provided the introductory remarks at all of the locations. Both of them did an outstanding job. We delivered 28 programs in 16 days to over 4,200 people. The following web page contains the entire itinerary along with links to videos of some of the programs - <http://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/JourneyHome.htm>.

After Appomattox the Task of Reconstruction Begins

United States General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant called for a quick restoration of the Union and reconciliation between Unionists and former Confederates following General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. "The Rebels are our countrymen again," explained Grant, and he wanted to end military rule and restore civil state governments in the South as soon as possible. When President Andrew Johnson expressed his wish to hang General Lee for treason in the summer of 1865, Grant threatened to resign. He argued that Lee had been protected by the surrender terms at Appomattox and that hanging him would complicate efforts at sectional reconciliation.

In the fall of 1865, President Johnson asked General Grant to take a tour

of the South to assess the sentiments of local residents and write a report on his findings. During his fifteen-day tour (November 27 – December 11) Grant made stops in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. He met with political leaders, Confederate veterans, and black Southerners during his tour. In a letter to his wife Julia while in Georgia, Grant stated that "people all seem pleasant...at least towards me, and I think towards the Government." At the same time he told a reporter that "my faith in the future rests on the soldier element of the South. I feel assured that those who did the fighting may be depended upon to restore tranquility."

When Grant returned to Washington, D.C., he reported that

white Southerners were "more loyal and better-disposed than [I] had expected to find them." But he also believed that some whites were still vengeful and that black Southerners still needed the protection of the U.S. military. These concerns were validated when Grant's commanders wrote him a month later stating that black and white Unionists in the South were subjected to persecution, fraud, and violence by former Confederates. In May 1866 a series of riots in Memphis saw 46 African Americans killed and more than 100 homes, churches, and schools destroyed. Grant realized that the protection of black Southerners trumped reconciliation with angry rebels.

The work of reconstructing the nation was only beginning.

Spotlight on the Park: New Film Debuts

This spring Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site premiered a new film in the visitor center theater. The film was written and produced by Aperture Films with the assistance of park staff. The film, titled “Ulysses S. Grant: A Legacy of Freedom,” uses both live-action segments and historic photos to tell the story of Ulysses S. Grant and his prominent role in our nation’s history.



The film begins with Grant’s emancipation in 1859 of William Jones, the only slave Grant is known to have owned. It recounts Grant’s first visits to White Haven, his courtship of Julia Dent, and his experiences in the war with Mexico and the Civil War.

The storyline emphasizes Grant’s role in the emancipation of enslaved African Americans and his efforts to ensure citizenship and civil rights for African Americans during his Presidency.

Early visitor reaction has been enormously positive, many visitors commenting that prior to viewing the film they had never known about Grant’s efforts on behalf of African Americans’ civil rights.

The film has a running time just under 23 minutes, and is shown throughout the day. As always, there is no charge for admission to the park or to watch the film.

Fred Dent’s White Haven Boyhood

Frederick Tracy Dent was born at White Haven on December 17, 1820; the third son of Frederick Fayette and Ellen Wrenshall Dent. Fred Dent was a roommate of Ulysses Grant at West Point. In a file at Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University, there is a copy of a notebook page on which Julia’s brother, Fred, wrote of his boyhood at White Haven. It is fascinating to note that the great naturalist, John J. Audubon, was a guest of Julia and Fred’s father, Colonel Dent. Here is Fred’s account:

“When I was a small boy I had a great fondness for the woods and spent hours in them. I learned the name and nature of every tree and bush, vine, weed, flower and grass, and their fruits and berries, seed and foliage. I very early in life became an observant and good woodsman. I always kept the points of compass in mind and in all my after life I never was lost (that is did not know my way home as to camp) be it on the vast prairies of the west or among the Rocky mts, in among the intricate



Frederick Tracy Dent, c. 1865.



John James Audubon, ornithologist, naturalist, painter, 1826.

battlefields of Virginia or the paths of the Alleghenies. The time of day, and my shadow on the ground told me the courses I was traveling, the compass plant on the plains told me N & S. Then in the woods I knew the lichen or moss grew thickest on the North of a tree or bush if it was a dark day and I had no compass. I always had a small needle and this laid on a small piece of bark cork or chip and placed in a puddle of water will always settle with the point of the needle to the north. I took great pleasure at this early period of boyhood in acquainting myself with the nature and habits of wild animals; their feeding time and where and on what they fed; their times for drinking and where they got their water. I did the same with the wild fowls both of the woods and the water and the game birds and songsters and although Mr. Audibon [sic] gave me personally my earliest instruction in the observation required by a student of natural history & ornithology (when he was my father’s guest while fitting out for his western trip), I fear I did not have the same motive as the great ornithologist – he took the scientist’s view, I the hunter.”



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Upcoming Events

- June 13 – Sara Moses, Holocaust survivor – 10:00 AM
- June 29 – July 3 – “1863 and Me” - YMCA Summer Camp at Ulysses S. Grant NHS
- July 25 - Ulysses S. Grant Death Commemoration - 10:00 AM

Did you know?

The fight for an eight hour working day began in the aftermath of the Civil War, but the idea of government regulating the workday presented serious ideological complications. The majority of business owners argued that a reduced workday would have deleterious effects on production, on workingmen's income, and on society at large. Labor leaders argued that the 24 hours of a day naturally divided into eight hours of work, eight hours for family and self-improvement such as education, and eight hours for sleep. Politicians grappled with the issue. In order to avoid the appearance

of the government meddling in private business, pressure came to bear on the idea of federal government workers being given an eight hour day. It was supposed that the benefits of an eight hour day could be proven to private employers through the example of federal workers. It would take until 1867 for a bill to finally pass. The bill had a major flaw however; it did not specify whether or not federal workers' pay would remain the same or be reduced along with the number of hours worked. Up until this time daily or weekly wages were more common than hourly wages. Most federal executives reduced wages along with the mandated

reduction in hours of work. The workers appealed to Washington, but President Johnson's Attorney General ruled that the law only addressed hours, not wages. Initially the change of administrations from Johnson to Ulysses Grant didn't seem to help. Grant's Attorney General reiterated his predecessor's ruling. But, Grant himself took up the issue. On May 19, 1869 he issued an executive order that stated: "From and after this date no reduction shall be made in the wages paid by the Government by the day to such laborers, workman, and mechanics, on account of such reduction in the hours of labor."